East meets West in festivals

16/06/2009

The East-West Festive Cultures project will study the similarities and differences between festivals comparing, for example, Hallowe'en with Ghost Month, and St Valentine's Day with the Lantern Festival. The research will look back to the 1950s to see how Chinese people have practised their cultural festivals while living in London. British born Chinese will be interviewed and the views recorded on aspects of their history, the effect of mixed marriages celebrating two cultures and so forth.

Hallowe'en derives from a Celtish festival 2000 years old. The Celts believed that ghosts of the departed came back to earth on this day. Ghost Day and Ghost Month are celebrated by Chinese people who pay homage to their deceased ancestors who, they believe, return to the Earth at this time.

A website will be created together with teaching materials and 800 copies of a DVD and information leaflet that will be available to local schools and libraries. Students from Hendon School will also carry out their work experience at Ming-Ai assisting with aspects of the project.

Chungwen Li, Dean of Ming-Ai (London) Institute, said: "It is an exciting project and we are keen to find out how the Chinese festive traditions have been modified when they meet the Western culture. More importantly, we wish to keep them going and cherish them with the next generation."

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "This project will help to illustrate how the Chinese and host communities in London share similarities and are enriched by cultural differences."

Notes to editors

The Ming-Ai London Institute is based in Cline Road and was established in March 1993 with the aim of promoting social, cultural, educational and economic exchanges among people from Hong Kong, China and Britain.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £850 million granted in London alone.

Further information

HLF Press Office, Vicky Wilford on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401937 or vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173

Chungwen Li, Dean of Ming-Ai (London) Institute on 020 8361 7161